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| DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION | TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE MANUAL |
| Chapter II: Family Investment Components | COMAR 07.03.03.03 |
| Section 1: Welfare Avoidance Grant (WAG) | |

Purpose

The purpose of a Welfare Avoidance Grant (WAG) is to meet a family's immediate and compelling need and prevent them from going on welfare (TCA) or to assist a family in getting off of welfare. It is a short-term, non-recurrent, cash payment. A WAG should help a family gain or maintain independence from TCA.

The local department case manager assesses eligibility for a WAG as part of the TCA assessment process at application or redetermination. A WAG may be offered to a TCA applicant family or recipient family according to the local department plan that has been approved by DHR. The customer must truly be in a situation where without the WAG, the family could not achieve independence from welfare.

- I. **Local plans** for WAGs must include:
 - A. Type of situations WAGs will cover; and
 - B. Maximum number of months the WAG will cover; and
 - C. Maximum number of times a family may receive a WAG; and
 - D. Verifications required to receive a WAG.
 - E. A WAG is not an entitlement. A family cannot apply for a WAG.
- II. **Assessment:** The case manager completes the assessment and Independence plan with the customer. (see Appendix 1 in this section) The case manager:
 - A. Evaluates the information obtained; and
 - B. Focuses the evaluation on the family's ability to support itself independent of TCA. (The family's continued need for food stamps or medical assistance should not enter into the evaluation.)
 - C. Explains about WAGs; and
 - D. Offers the option of a WAG if appropriate.
 - E. The customer and the case manager must decide together if a WAG is appropriate for the family.

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III. Independence Plan

- A. The case manager and customer create a family Independence Plan.
- B. The plan details the family's goals and the actions the family must take to achieve their goals.
- C. The Plan states what the customer's and the agency's responsibilities are.

IV. WAG Agreement and Rights and Responsibilities

- A. The customer and case manager decide if a WAG is appropriate.
- B. The WAG agreement must clearly state the :
 - 1. Need the WAG will cover; and
 - 2. Amount of the WAG; and
 - 3. Time period the WAG will cover; and
 - 4. That the family is ineligible for TCA for any month covered by a portion of the WAG.
- C. Both the case manager and the customer must sign the WAG agreement and the rights and responsibilities form. (In two-adult households, both adults must sign the forms.)
- D. Both the customer and the case manager, under the penalty of perjury, sign the Rights and Responsibilities form.

V. A Welfare Avoidance Grant:

- A. Is paid based on an agreement signed by the TCA applicant or customer and the case manager that addresses the areas listed in IV B above.
- B. May not exceed 3 times the maximum allowable TCA grant for one month for the number of individuals in the assistance unit unless:
 - 1. There is an immediate and compelling need, and

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2. The maximum grant amount does not exceed 12 times the maximum allowable TCA grant amount for the number of individuals in the assistance unit.
- C. Authorized for any part of a month counts as a full month's grant.
 - D. May be issued to a family more than once, if the family has a different instance of immediate and compelling need and the need is not in a month already covered by a WAG.
- NOTE:** Immediate and compelling need means that the situation is such that unless a WAG is provided the family must begin to receive or will continue to receive TCA.
- E. The household may not receive TCA in any month that is covered by any portion of a WAG.
 - F. May be issued more than once provided another instance of immediate and limited need occurs.
 - G. Is never prorated. The date in the month the customer applies is not a consideration.
- VI. TCA may not be paid to a family that has received a WAG until the period covered by the WAG expires.
 - VII. WAG customers may apply for non-public assistance food stamps and non-public assistance medical assistance.
 - VIII. WAG customers are not required to file for or assign child support rights to the State. The case manager should encourage any family that has an absent parent to file for child support if the custodial parent or caretaker relative has not done so.
 - IX. The local department director or the director's designee must approve and sign off all WAGs before they are issued.
 - X. CARES must be thoroughly narrated indicating what the situation is, why a WAG was offered, and the dates the WAG covers. Case managers should use the assessment to complete their narration.

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Example:

Martha Stewart applied for TCA for herself and two children April 10th. The case manager completed the assessment and reviewed the family's situation. The case manager discovered that Mrs. Stewart quit her job. Mrs. Stewart was supposed to begin a new job, but the job was delayed 2 ½ months because a new company took over. Mrs. Stewart applied for unemployment but is not eligible. The case manager discussed the options with Mrs. Stewart and offered a WAG instead of TCA. The TCA grant amount for her family size (3) is \$477. Mrs. Stewart needs \$1100 to assist with her expenses for the next few months.

The WAG amount needed = \$1100 / \$477 (TCA grant amount for 3 people) = 2 months full grant and \$146 for the month of June. Mrs. Stewart's family is ineligible for TCA for April, May and June. Mrs. Stewart may not receive TCA until July if she reapplies for benefits. (A family may not receive TCA in any month for which a portion of a WAG was received.)

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APPENDIX 1

Assessment Questions For Determining Eligibility for A WAG

Use these questions as a guide to obtain the information needed to determine eligibility for a Welfare Avoidance Grant (WAG).

1. Why is the customer applying for or receiving TCA?
2. Who is in the house?
3. How did the family manage in the past?
4. How much income does the family have and what is the source?
5. What caused a change in the day-to-day situation that the customer must now apply for TCA? or
6. Why hasn't there been a change in the day-to-day situation with the TCA recipient that would enable the family to get off of TCA?
7. Does the customer have a job? Evaluating a customer's job potential on his/her statement that he/she can get a job anywhere is not enough. If a job is available why didn't the individual take it?
8. What are the customer's education level, job skills and readiness for obtaining and keeping a job?
9. What is the immediate and compelling need?
 - ◆ An eviction may make the customer's life difficult, but the customer is not likely to lose a job because of being evicted. Explore resources the customer may have.
 - ◆ The customer's car broke down but the customer lives on a bus line. It may be inconvenient to use the bus but the customer can still get to work.
10. Is the immediate and compelling need a covered situation in the local department's WAG Plan?
11. Would a WAG help a recipient leave TCA for self-sufficiency, or just get the family off TCA for a few months?
 - ◆ What support systems does the customer have in place as the family moves to self-sufficiency?